

# THE CATHOLIC ART QUARTERLY

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### SUBSCRIPTIONS, MEMBERSHIPS AND PRIVILEGES

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# EDITORIAL



THE CATHOLIC ART ASSOCIATION was organized in 1937 to encourage a true understanding and a good practice of the arts among Catholics. It aims to renew the sacred Christian spirit in all the arts, those that provide for the necessities of everyday life as well as those that are specifically ecclesiastical. Its message is therefore addressed to Catholics of all kinds, but for people of various vocations it has special services to perform.

THE PRIEST has the duty of equipping his church beautifully and economically. His furnishings must be decent, *decus*, fitting to their high purpose in every way. In our days this is not an easy duty for him to fulfill. The secular museums, galleries and art magazines can help him very little. The commercial church furnishing houses even less. "Good taste" can not help him. The "secular" art world and the secular "world of commerce" have long ago proved themselves feeble instruments for the production of works of Sacred Art. "Good taste is always my taste," Etienne Gilson says: it is fated to change with the changing fashions. No priest can know whether or not an object is worth the price asked for it, unless he knows how good it is in itself, and of its own kind. His only hope is sound judgment based on logical and practical Catholic principles. The Catholic Art Association exists to supply this logic and these principles to practical problems that the patrons of Sacred Art must face and solve.

THE ARTIST is confronted with the task of synthesizing his work and his faith. There being, at present, few Catholic schools of art, almost all Catholic artists are trained in the schools of the secular "art world", the world of the museums, the galleries, the experts, the one-man-show, the collector and the dealer. But these schools can do little to help the

Catholic artist to make his synthesis because, in so far as they have a clear philosophy of art at all, it is one which is contradictory to basic Catholic principles. It puts, quite frankly, secondary aims — aesthetic pleasure, artistic reputation or even money-making — ahead of the good of the work to be done: the service of God and neighbor. The Church, on the other hand, puts first things first. A true synthesis can be made only by those who have a firm grasp of the Church's coherent and unambiguous philosophy, and a real insight into the problems facing the modern artist. Since its founding, the Catholic Art Association has striven to apply age-old principles to contemporary problems. It makes no claim to have covered the entire field, but it has at least consistently attempted to justify its name and to expound the full implications of the words *Catholic* and *art* taken together.

THE TEACHER has the duty of instructing children in normal and universal arts, and in giving these their full Christian meaning. The training which he has usually received in a secular art school or Teachers' College may be a very real hindrance to him, and this for two reasons: The arts are taught in a manner that is too often untraditional and abnormal, and, secondly, lacking in religious orientation. The Catholic teacher tends to adopt the methods he has learned, with no modifi-



cation except the addition of religious subject matter; and he misses the essential rationality of art which is the root of its Christian sanctification. The Catholic Art Association exists to apply the traditional wisdom of the great Christian teachers and their followers, to the problems of a Christian teacher in a pagan world. The task is not easy, but the Catholic Art Association claims at least to have come a considerable way toward a real Christian Art Education.

THE LAYMAN is sometimes appalled by the difficulties that confront him when he considers what "the reconstruction of the social order" means. Construction is the antidote to destruction. But how can we Catholics help to reconstruct society if we do not understand the forces that are

destroying it? What is wrong with industrial society as such? What is the normal relationship of producer and consumer? What is the difference between "artists" and other producers? Is art a specialty of the few, as the world believes, or is it the virtue of all who make things according to right reason? And if the latter, what is right reason in making things, and how is it to be surely known from wrong reason? On most social questions there is guidance for Catholics today, but we need a clearer understanding of the traditions of production before we can expect to see a rich flowering of art such as characterized the Ages of Faith. The Catholic Art Association is dedicated to the study of the modern problem of reconstruction, in the light of universal principles, and offers help to those who are similarly dedicated.

## TEN YEARS AGO

### SCIENCE AND ART



SCIENCE is the business of knowing truths, and it necessarily works by analysis breaking wholes down into parts, and "learning more and more about less and less." Science distinguishes, divides, dissects, dis-integrates, dis-entangles. It learns to understand the whole by first understanding the parts that make up the whole. It abstracts the principles or forms of things from their particular material manifestations. Art, on the other hand, is the business of making things. It works by synthesis. It envisages wholes rather than parts. It puts form into matter, shaping the appropriate material to the likeness of

a pattern seen in the mind. Instead of dis-integrating and pulling down particular things, it integrates and builds them up. Its aim is not knowledge but production. Art and science do and must work together, but neither is served if we confuse them with each other. Concepts may be taught, and therefore sciences—like geometry—may be taught in schools and by books. An art can be learned only—by practice. You can learn to work only by working. You cannot learn to ride a horse, or milk a cow, or write a legible and beautiful hand except by doing it. Books and teachers can help only with occasional hints. It is for this reason that art schools and their students fail, while shops and apprentices succeed.

# THE NEGLECTED ART OF STORY TELLING

Edith Ballinger Price



IT IS small wonder that the art of story-telling is neglected, when one considers the pressing claims of the radio, the movies, and that latest time-killer — television. But story-telling should not be lightly brushed aside or placed in the discard as a primitive makeshift born of a pre-atomic age. For just as there is really no comparison between the best recorded music and the quality of a live symphony orchestra, or between a good motion picture and a good stage play — so there is no comparison between the story read and the story told. It is a different medium, a different art. It is its live and personal quality and its overlap into the field of drama that sets it apart.

You may think that you have never been called upon to tell a story, but all of us are challenged every time we recount an experience to a friend, or relate the day's activities to the family at the dinner table. And how many of us sidetrack the point among irrelevant detail — or, if the point is ever reached it may well be interesting only to the teller of the incident and has nothing in it to catch the attention of the hearer.

Few of us are born story-tellers; most of us have difficulty in narrating an actual happening in a dramatic, or amusing, or significant manner, let alone making up a tale as we go along. The born story-tellers are heirs of the bards of ancient days, who could weave a whole extemporaneous saga for the amusement and edification of their overlords, in a day long before newspapers made history, and when

few people could read the few books. The born story-teller is to be envied — for the father who can sit in the firelight with a child on either knee, and spin a good yarn, need fear no competition from TV or any other pre-bedtime attraction.

There is magic in the spoken word if it is suitably spoken. We all know the difference there is between *reading* a good ghost story — and *hearing* one well told by the light of a dying fire or a waning moon. Such experiences come all too seldom nowadays. We are becoming conditioned to mechanized entertainment, yet wondering why we are less entertained than in days gone by. And in order that our children may recapture some of that intimate pleasure, perhaps we had better consider learning to tell stories.

We may not be able to make up a tale as we go along, but any of us can learn to tell a story some one else has invented. Most people *speak* with much more emphasis and dramatic effect than they attain in reading aloud (another neglected but worthwhile art). Therefore it is good, at times, to be freed from the printed page and the eye on the book. You who work with groups of children surely know how much better is the story told than the story read. For you can hold your audience with your eye; you can gauge your effects by having always within your sight the circle of spellbound faces; and, borrowing a little from the drama (not too much, or you confuse the effect), by slight gesture and expression and change of voice you can bring the tale alive. Often, strangely enough, more alive than do the elaborate methods of radio or TV.

If you memorize easily, you can learn a simple story practically word for word.



That is all very well, except that it is apt to be a bit inflexible — and if you depend too much on remembering what *words* come next instead of what *happens* next, you may get stuck — and that is fatal, for you lose the children at once. It is really better to have the main points firmly in mind and embroider them spontaneously. That is how the variants of the old ballads happened — the singer forgot a word or two of the original and put in a few of his own, and that version was handed down by those who heard him. But be sure the main points, the important things, *are* firmly in mind. For instance, if your tale concerns the adventures of three brothers, ending, of course, with the triumph of the youngest and supposedly stupid one — be sure, before you begin, that you know what happened to each one. If you can't for the life of you remember what befell the second one, it is far better to make it a story about *two* brothers and leave him out altogether, rather than to discover when you come to the second one that you've forgotten what he did, and begin to flounder and backtrack. For if you stumble, your audience is no longer spellbound — it begins to squirm, whether it is a score of listeners, or one child on your knee.

And what about the child on your knee? Why do we have so little time nowadays? The more labor-saving devices are ours, the less time we seem to have. We have automobiles, telephones, step-saving kitchens, automatic washers, deep freezers, electric mixers; our food comes prepared, precooked, frozen, packaged, nothing to add but a cup of water, complete with a flimsy little baking dish so that we don't even have to reach into the kitchen cupboard for a pie-pan. We should have more time for the children at home.

Strangely enough, it was our ancestress — the woman who churned, baked, milked the cows, spun, wove, made by hand the

family's clothes from the material she had herself produced; who fired the brick oven and kept the coals on the hearth just right for the cooking, dried the apples, put down the salt pork, preserved the quinces, quilted the counterpanes and braided the rugs — it was this woman who still, at sundown, had time or *made* time to gather her children about her and tell them stories. Perhaps from the Bible, or perhaps tales of her own childhood in the old country, or in the new when the Indians lurked around the homestead.

Unless our time-saving luxuries give us more time for our children, something is wrong. Because they are out from under foot, out at play, they are not necessarily being nourished. Because they are quiet in a corner with a book, they are not necessarily being nourished — we must be very sure what book it is, in which they are so absorbed. Because they are listening to the radio, or watching TV they are not necessarily being nourished — especially if the program is so exciting that they don't want to eat supper and have a hard time going to sleep. Some night when the television is out of order — try telling a story; just for fun.

And what shall the stories be about? The ages are filled with good ones, immortal ones. And we can not expect to get away from the fact that there is eternal conflict between the good men and the bad men — whether it be the hero against the wicked giant, or the knight of the Table Round against the renegade — or the super airman against the creature from outer space. Only let us be very sure that the good men triumph by faith and heroism and chivalry rather than by brutality or violence — and that the evil they combat be not too frightening or horrible, and never by any means made attractive in any way. And if our stories of heroism and adventure can be divorced sometimes from the struggle of man against man, so much

the better — for in the conquest of a mountain, the mastery of the sea, the taming of the wilderness, the exploration of the unknown land, there can lie quite as much to quicken the pulse as in the pursuit of a criminal or the horror of war.

Heroism and high adventure can go hand in hand with moral courage and firm faith. And here the wise story-teller has the advantage, and the privilege, and the great duty of free choice.

Dear child, you sit beside my chair,  
With firelight haloed in your hair,  
And beg of me that I should write  
A tale for you of old delight.

Ah, if I could, for you I'd weave  
A web of silver words and gold —  
All that the world will not believe;  
All that a magic page might hold.

With gallant hand I'd pluck my pen  
Where Pan has gathered reeds to blow;  
I'd stir the page with words again  
More sweet than music and more slow.

Like gray rain dropping from the eaves,  
Like lute and shawm and psaltery,  
Like clash of steel and drift of leaves,  
My woven web of words should be.

White as the magic of the moon,  
Crimson as torchlight on a sword,  
Slender as one small tree-toad's tune,  
My tale should be for you outpoured.

And all the splendor of the sea  
And all the mildness of the mead —  
The whole wide world's great gallantry  
Should be set forth for you to read.

Dear child, you sit beside my chair,  
Fair in the firelight, elfin fair —  
And in your hands I lay tonight  
The magic key to all delight.





# WORK

Thomas Derrick



AMONG the medieval wall-paintings in churches, which Dr. Tristram's work has made known to us, and preserved for us,

there are many which show the figure of Christ surrounded by a "glory" or aureole, which in some is composed of craftsmen's tools, here and there shown cutting into His flesh.

The significance of such a picture would be realized and accepted by those worshipping in the churches at the time that it was made. But lest at this time there should be any doubt, it may be well to explain that it implied the belief in Work as being a part, and a large part, of the Passion or Ordeal of Man's life upon earth, which, in order that his soul may be saved, must be accepted, and, indeed, embraced. Thus understood, Work is not primarily done for wages, nor for "profits": It is done, in the real sense, "for a living." It was held that work thus accepted as a vocation and an obligation, faithfully discharged with all its concomitants of fatigue, hardship, and pain, in the same way that we expect the soldier or the priest to fulfil all the obligations of his vocation, enabled men to reach full spiritual health and earthly happiness. At his chosen trade he must acquire mastery, and to it he owed his devotion, extended even to his tools as instruments of his trade and of his salvation. Perfection in the product, including the elusive quality of beauty, derived from such devotion.

Whether consciously or not, some such view of work and of life has survived even in England into quite recent times. It may

still be found. It is probably imperishable. But in places where workmen have given place to "hands" or "the proletariat" — that is to say, where responsible workmen have ceased to exist — devotion formerly directed to work is atrophied or deflected into something like *shove ha'penny*.

Evidence of it in work may be found in a book recently published, entitled, "*The Village Carpenter*,"<sup>1</sup> which has beauty inherent, as has the carpenter's work with which it is concerned. It has the same simplicity, dignity, precision, and entire lack of pretension. At times it has more, as carpenter's work may have more.

When we now speak of "masters and men," we mean "employers and employed". But mastership once meant mastery of a trade. When we now speak of a "shop," we refer to a place where things are sold; but the word "shop" once meant a place where things were *made*; and if things were bought there, it was from the man who had made them, and who knew what had gone to their making. The particular shop with which this book deals was only one of a multitude contributing to the life of the English countryside, and helping to maintain and enrich it out of the resources that grew on the spot. It would possibly surprise those who worked in it that anybody should think it worth while to write a book about anything so ordinary and so *normal*. They would not realize that when so many normal things are threatened with extinction, some account of them should be preserved in order that the prone body of Sanity should be kept warm.

This is the sort of man the Master Carpenter was: "Often the work on hand

was far away, and the men would find temporary lodgings there. At such times they would start work very early each morning. But it was not unusual for them, on arriving at the job, to find grandfather already there; he had risen much earlier and walked the whole way to put in a day's work with them. On one such distant job, an old beam had to be sawn down the centre, and the sawyers had grumbled. Grandfather heard of it with vexation. He sharpened his hand-saw overnight, rose early, walked there, and sawed it down himself by hand. At another time the large doors for a barn were being made at the workshop. When they were finished the farmer sent his waggon to cart them to his farm, six miles away. It was afterwards discovered that the small inset latchet door had been left behind. Grandfather carried it there himself the following day."

Of the men, few of those regularly employed had ever worked for anybody else. "Each possessed his own set of tools, jealously prized, cared for, and guarded. Each man to us was part of the firm, his individuality a feature of its sentiment."

The work had proceeded through centuries, from one generation to another, and the material of it had largely grown at the door. A man might work the wood of a tree that his grandfather had seen planted. "We remember the trees; the places where they had grown from saplings to maturity usually had some association with our lives . . ."

The needs of the countryside were understood in all their variety, and faithfully served. "The work that we executed was closely related to the life of the village, and of the district for a few miles round. There was continual coming and going from the shop to the places for which the work was intended; a few days' work in the shop, making doors, windows, or other fitments for a house or farm, then a period

at the place fixing the work, and doing what else was required there. Thus were we ever in contact with the life of the village, and a necessary part of its communal existence.

"No field for miles around but had its gate that sooner or later would need repair: no farmer who did not need his new cow-cribs, sheep-troughs, or ladders. No house, from the vicarage to the labourer's cottage, but had at some time or other a defect in its woodwork for which the services of our men would be required. Thus the lore of the village became interwoven with the lore of our workshop, which, in fact, was part of the village life, a definite feature inseparable from its conduct, as also were the workshops of the wheelwright, the blacksmith, the saddler, the bootmaker, and the village tailor."

There were fence rails and posts to be made and kept in repair. Gates — "so did no gate leave the carpenter's shop in those days without the hall-mark of the craftsman, the little touch of beauty engraved on the article of utility." "A field gate of good English oak would last the greater part of a lifetime, never sagging or becoming loose at the joints. My father frequently pointed out to me gates that he had made fifty years before."

There were all the innumerable things of wood about the farm to be made and maintained — even to the pumps; and of these we read how hard and exacting, and even dangerous, was the work involved. There was the intricate construction of roofs and the wooden staircases and fittings of the house. The work at water-mills and windmills receive fascinating chapters to themselves. There were furniture repairs and coffins. At the other extreme from cleft fencing, the sawyers were able to cut at the pit, "quite well and evenly" from a piece of black grained walnut, a veneer for mending a Queen Anne bureau! How, asks the writer, was veneer ever sawn in



the days before the machine to such wafer-like thinness as exists on older unrepaired parts of that old bureau?

Throughout there is devotion to work — as work. Everything is done in the way, and at the speed, that has been proved by experience to be the right one. Yet it attains variety and beauty, although neither of these is consciously sought.

All methods had been determined by a long and slow process of growth, the following of a tradition perfected through centuries of usage. There is never a suggestion of capricious or spasmodic activity. All of it seems attuned to its natural setting, and to the slow and sure processes of nature surrounding it, which seem to fix its tempo, the normal tempo of man's work and life. This book is a story of work as life, and life as work, with the exercise of masterly skill as its consolation — one which we are selling — for a Mess of Gadgets.

From a nation of workers we have become one of automatons and spectators. Advisedly the handles we turn are "fool-proof." But not all the multitudinous advantages that derive from "plugging in"

can atone for the lost prerogative of responsible work with the hands. Fascinated, a crowd will always gather to watch it being done. There is at least one man left — in Berkshire — who still turns wooden bowls out of elm, in his own workshop, with no "power" but that of his own body. And to his bewilderment, he is regarded as a spectacle.

From the hideousness and monotony of the industrial town we turn despairingly to aesthetic nostrums to bring beauty and variety into our surroundings — "the application of art to industry." We hoard pathetically in State museums the ordinary products of workshops such as the carpenter's shop described in this book; the things made by undistinguished Englishmen in the course of their ordinary work, as work was once done, when beauty came unsought.

Will Englishmen ever again be equal to a life as exacting as that of "The Village Carpenter," or be worthy again of its consolations?

1. *"The Village Carpenter"*: by Walter Rose—  
Cambridge University Press, 8s. 6d.



# WORKSHOP ON ART AS LANGUAGE

*Sister M. Jeanne, O.S.F.*



**I**N PROVIDING both the occasion and the facilities for the conduct of another Workshop on Art, The Catholic University of America continues to earn the gratitude and respect not only of the members of the Catholic Art Association, but of all those interested in the arts throughout the country. We are particularly in the debt of the Director of Workshops, Dr. Roy J. Deferrari, and of Sister Jeanne, O.S.F., who has directed the Workshop on Art for the past two years.

In this, the sixth workshop, held at Catholic University from June 15 to June 26, 1956, the communicative value of the arts was stressed. Mrs. Alfred Berger initiated the series of morning lectures by reminding us that the created universe speaks to us of God and is the basis for the visual language of the artist. Sydney M. Kaplan's lecture, "Seeing is Believing," brought out forcefully the high role of meaning in painting, sculpture, and architecture, both in the East and West, and in prehistoric to modern times. Graham Carey explained the nature of symbolism in architecture as exemplified by a contemporary church building. In "The Rhetoric of Music," Rev. Henry S. Kawalec appraised traditional and modern musical forms as a language, and Rev. William S. Leonard, S.J., reminded all Christian artists of their responsibility to help the multitudes to an intelligent worship. Viktor Lowenfeld effectively maintained that the work of children is ordinarily communicative, and he described the characteristics common to creativeness in any field of endeavor. These and other talks in the series were followed by a discussion period in which there was enthusiastic response from the participants.

Throughout the Workshop, Sister Esther, S.P., daily conducted an open forum in which she gave illustrated lectures on various aspects of the visual

language of artists. These stimulating sessions were followed by seminars on such varied topics as: "Understanding Works of Art," "Techniques and Materials for the Elementary School," "Planning a Course of Study in Art," and "Metalcraft and Jewelry." Under capable direction these seminars provided further opportunities for discussion as well as for work in various materials.

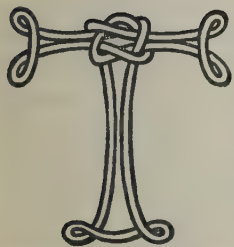
A unique feature of this workshop was the provision for a professional demonstration of techniques on each day of the workshop at a time when the entire group could be present. Capable craftsmen demonstrated silk screen printing, stone carving, silver engraving, wood and linoleum block printing; and James Kuo distinguished himself in three demonstrations: enameling on copper, lithograph printing, and water color painting.

If the success of a workshop can be measured in terms of the enthusiasm of the participants, then this was no exception to the series of successful workshops which the C. A. A. has staffed.

The Proceedings of the Workshop on Art as Language will carry the complete text of all lectures and a summary report of the work accomplished in the seminars. It will be available early in 1957 from the Catholic University of America Press, Washington 17, D. C.



# A WEDDING RING



THE article entitled "A Wedding Ring" printed in our Easter issue has elicited the following protest from a reader in England. The letter arrived too late to be included in the Pentecost issue, so we are printing it here, together with a reply from the author of the original article. The objector makes some telling points from the technical point of view—matters which are seldom considered in the design of jewelry. His main complaint, however, is against those designers who will not allow unadorned simplicity to tell its own story. He directs our attention to a danger that is all too often unnoticed by the conscientious craftsman.



THE purpose of a wedding ring is to show the status of the wearer. It is a recognised convention in some countries that a fancy ring worn by a woman

on a particular finger denotes engagement and that a plain ring on that finger denotes marriage. A ring of knotted wire is a fancy ring which signifies to the public that the wearer is not yet married. This is part of our social language, like the convention about red and green lights, which it is unwise to ignore.

The wedding ring is far more important than any other ring. Every imaginable complexity has been used on rings for vanity or ostentation. There is a strong case for reserving the beauty of utter simplicity to honour the noblest ring and to dissociate it from all of lesser significance.

The wedding ring is to be worn continuously and for life. To stand this the metal should be as hard as possible. Gold can only be hardened by hammering or by great pressure, such as the drawing of wire. The joining of the ring requires great heat which leaves the metal soft. Knotted wire must be joined after being

knotted and so must remain soft. A plain gold ring can be hammered all round after it is joined and thus have the utmost resistance to wear and scratches.

As the wedding ring is to be worn for life it must be adaptable to change in the finger. Knuckles usually thicken with age and rings need stretching. A plain ring can be put on the tribler and tapped round with a hammer whenever this is necessary.

Each of these reasons seems to me more important than sentiments about love knots.

Anyway, knots are for string, not for wire. The way to join wire is not to tie it but to bend and twist it.



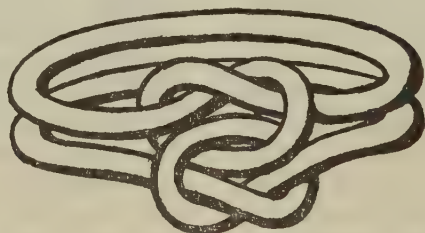
FIND the above letter very persuasive. In particular I like the writer's insistence on the importance of simplicity in the forms of important objects, and on the danger of swamping the primary meaning of things by ornament which at best expresses secondary meaning and at worst no meaning at all. Such a truth cannot be pointed out too clearly or too often. However, I feel that some points may be made in defence of the original paper.

What is customary today has not always been the custom of Christendom. For the last century or so the plain gold band has been the typical form, but a visit to almost any of our great museums will show that this was not the case in the youth of the Church. The first centuries showed a great variety of ornamented wedding rings. These ornaments usually consisted in the conjunction of three personalities, those of the spouses and that of Christ. The idea was freely and variously treated. We show here an enlarged photograph of such a ring in the collection of the British Museum in London. (Page 127.)

The plain gold band is used today as much by those whose ideas of marriage are secular as by the most devout Christians. Among these latter there are some who wish to have their wedding rings sealed with some specifically Christian mark. The simple ring no longer means as much as they want it to mean. The device which I put forward was a single solution to this problem, for an age in which ring makers are not as accomplished artists as they once were. The Roman and Byzantine rings of the collections can be seen today only in museums of art, but almost anyone can tie two overhand knots. My suggestion was one solution of the problem of those who want a specifically Christian wedding ring, but miss the skill of ancient artists.

My critic speaks of "sentiments about love knots". The long introductory passage on the prehistory of marriage was written in the belief that it expressed ideas as important as they are unfamiliar. To most readers it may well have been boring, but it could hardly be called sentimental or frivolous. The critic seems to have given an objective value to associations with the phrase "true-love knot" which exist in his own mind.

My critic also points out that knots are characteristic of cords rather than of wires. It is indeed easier to tie flexible than inflexible strands, but it is clear that wire can be tied because it has been. However, this seems to me quite beside the point. Whether a knot is tied in string or wire, whether it is cast in grass as in Benin, or carved in stone as in ancient Ireland, drawn with a pen and cut on pear wood as by Durer in his famous designs, the importance of the knot is not in its material but in its meaning, and in our European culture its meaning is that of *riddle* or *mystery*. To the analogical mind knots tied in marlin or photographed on paper have exactly the same intention. It is true, but it is deplorable, that among us this ancestral analogy is largely forgotten. The human mind is still educable, and what has been lost can be recovered.







*This illustration is from an enlarged photograph of a late Imperial wedding ring of gold, from the collection of the British Museum with whose permission it is here reproduced. It exemplifies a general type of Christian marriage ring of which many specimens have been preserved to us from the Fifth to the Fifteenth Centuries. There are three particularly fine early examples on exhibition at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D. C. and an elaborate one in enamel and precious stones from the Fourteenth Century at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. What differentiates this type of ring from the unornamented gold circlet which is customary with us is the addition of a specifically Christian symbol, the two spouses being shown as joined to one another by their union with Christ. In the present example this symbol takes the form of portrait heads cut in intaglio, with the cross between and above them.*

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate VISUAL OR NATURALISTIC TYPE OF ARTISTIC REALITY.  
The Object of Art expresses the outer appearance of the thing represented.

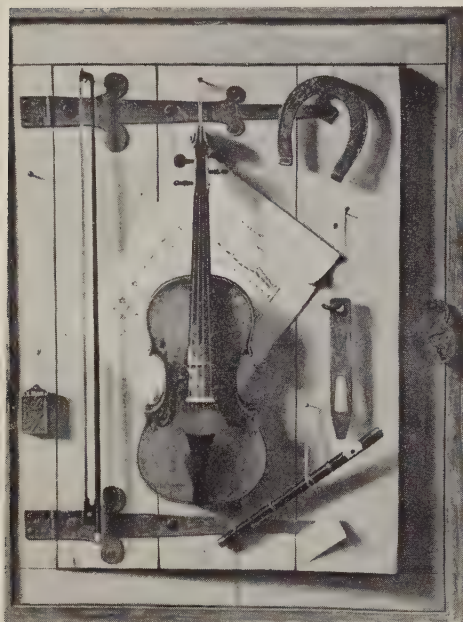


FIGURE 1.

Painting, "Music and Good Luck",  
William Harnett. The picture truly  
expresses the visual appearance of  
the objects represented.



FIGURE 2. "Fur Covered Objects".

(cup, saucer, and spoon)

Meret Oppenheim

(Coll. Museum of Modern Art)

The claim to express visual appearance is false.

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate STRUCTURAL TYPE OF ARTISTIC REALITY.  
The Object of Art expresses the inner structure of the thing represented.



FIGURE 3.

Brush Drawing, "Boddhisattva",  
artist unknown (Coll. Shosoin)  
The drawing truly expresses the  
inner structure of the figure.



FIGURE 4.

Print, "Madonna", Helene Strohmeier  
The drawing falsely claims to express  
the inner structure of the figure.



# SEEING IS BELIEVING

*This paper was originally read as a contribution to the general subject of "Art as Communication", which was the theme of the Work Shop on Art held at The Catholic University of America in Washington, in June 1956. It is here reprinted from the Workshop Proceedings, with the permission of the Director of Workshops, The Catholic University.*

by Sidney M. Kaplan  
Ohio State University

SEEING is believing, if we can assume that the relationships of what we see are true. But every person concerned with precision, including the archer of Neolithic times, has been aware that apparent reality does not always correspond to actual reality, or truth. If there were an easy correspondence between things as they seem and things as they are, the bowman would never miss his mark, nor the traveller ever lose his way. Ever since Man has noticed the discrepancy between what he intends (which may be precise) and what he accomplishes (which may be approximate), he has known the meaning of delusion.

Today, large sums of money, much equipment, and great effort are expended to create visual situations in which the actual relationships do not correspond to what we think we see. These projects are called "Visual Demonstration Centers", or some similar name. Yet all that such Demonstration proves, in the last analysis, is that *delusion is possible*. This is a truism of which every competent Neolithic was aware.

Since delusion represents mistaken belief, that is, error; it is fruitless to create further delusion, however profound or delightful the occupation may seem. Man's business is to know reality, and to create truth to the tiny extent that he is able. If this is our aim, then seeing must be qualified by understanding. When see-

ing and understanding coincide, then, and only then, belief may come from vision.

In seeing a work of art, be it painting, sculpture, architecture, dance or drama; in hearing music or poetry; there can be no understanding apart from the purpose of the creator. Without purpose, art becomes mere manipulation of materials; and our judgement of such art is limited to material forms. Nowadays, such a basis for judgement is fashionable. It is termed "limiting oneself to the object alone", or "the aesthetic view". An aesthetic view that excludes purpose, and consequently excludes meaning, cannot distinguish between the formal product of a snail and the formal product of an architect. The perfection of a spiral shell and the perfection of a spiral staircase become formal equals. This is the reason why curious driftwood is presently sold in Ye Arte Shoppe rather than in the lumber yard.

But men are not snails. Man puts something into his productions that the snail does not. Apart from matter and energy, human production, at the very least, must include a point-of-view. That is a minimum condition. Even skill is a broader consideration. But while point-of-view may be almost confined to the "object in itself"; insofar as it is put there by the artist, it still relates to something outside the limits of the frame, or outside the plastic mass. To simplify the problem of understanding an art, we may roughly consider point-of-view as a minimum inescapable purpose which is *almost* inherent

in the object itself. As a purpose, point-of-view is so diffuse and so weak, that it would be much better to call it the inherent reality of the work, reserving the term "purpose" for more specific use. In terms of realities, we can classify objects in the sense of what they are, rather than what they represent or refer to. Yet we must remember that classification is only one small part of understanding.

Aside from the raw media, all arts of all ages have six kinds of reality: 1) Visual or Auditory, 2) Symbolic, 3) Subjective or Psychological, 4) Structural, 5) Functional, and 6) Kinetic. Any single work may embody elements from one or more of these realities, in combination. Indeed, it is hard to find a work that is a pure example of only one type. Furthermore, each of these realities has its false or fraudulent counterpart; forms which have the semblance of reality, but which lack truth. These false counterparts use the distracting presence of material to hide the presence of delusion. But a fact of matter is not necessarily a matter of fact. As we shall see, incidentally, there is such a thing as concrete nonsense.

The American painter, William Harnett, provides good examples of the first type of reality. "Music and Good Luck" (pl. I, 1), painted in 1888, is primarily concerned with the visual appearances of things. Since the painting is not the object itself, we would be better advised to call it a work of visual realism rather than visual reality, but this is a metaphysical distinction somewhat beyond the scope of this paper. We have many familiar names for this kind of art; naturalism, realism, surface naturalism, and so on. It is unfortunate that many people have come to regard Visual Reality as the basic standard from which all other types of art are derived. This idea of derivation is always implicit whenever the form of a work is described as "distorted", regardless of

disapproval. Herbert Read typifies this view when he says, "If we leave Greek art and consider early Celtic or Chinese art, we shall find that the distortion has proceeded so far that the representational motive has been entirely lost, and we are left with nothing but a geometrical pattern." (*The Meaning of Art*, part I, sec. 12). However generous the intent, the whether the context is one of approval or assumption is of one basic kind of reality, visual, which is distorted for a variety of reasons. This utterly limited notion of reality has caused untold confusion in seeing art as well as in understanding it. A "geometrical" art is not necessarily a distorted version of standard visual realism.

The opposite of any kind of reality is some kind of delusion or untruth. In art, it is often difficult to identify the untruth, simply because of the convincing presence of canvas, paint, stone, bronze, and willing purchasers. But if we identify art embodying delusion as *manneristic*, instead of "untruthful", we shall be very close to its character, indeed. There is a mannerism corresponding to every class of reality. Meret Oppenheim's "Fur Covered Objects" (pl. I, 2) are objects only in the sense that they have substance. Unlike Harnett's objects, they do not refer to surfaces as you would see them in the commonsense world. The Meret objects claim to represent things which you could not possibly see. Hence, in terms of the visual measure, Oppenheim is producing an optical contradiction. These objects are nonsense-objects; but since they are in the manner of Visual Reality, we may as well call them manneristic.

Structural Reality, our second kind, concerns the way in which things are put together; the way in which the outward shape is determined. Obviously, structure has little to do with surfaces (still less with textures), since the surface merely indi-



cates where a given structure ends. The shape of Man is determined first by his bones, secondly by his muscular and glandular volumes. It would be folly to ascribe the shape of Man to his skin. Only in the soap-bubble do the skin and structure coincide; and it is for this very reason that the bubble is completely evanescent, the precise symbol of delusion. Art of Structural Reality employs the essences of internal shape, to the extent possible. It seeks to omit every non-essential which, by nature of being non-essential, simply hides the internal logic of forces, directions, planes and volumes. In work that is solely structural, these elements must be self-evident. Perhaps the brush-drawings of China and Japan come the closest to Structural Reality.

An eighth century drawing of a Bodhisattva, from the Sho Soin collection (pl. I, 3), is a good example of such structural drawing. Only the most crucial planes and volumes are indicated, and these mostly by their essential edges. What surface we may imagine, except for the hair, is pre-determined by the edges of these planes. On the other hand, it is possible for a work to assert structure by these very means, but to fail in achieving it. In Helene Strohmeier's "Madonna and Child" (pl. I, 4), we have the apparent use of edges to imply planes, and in turn, volumes. But it is not the essential edges that have been chosen. Moreover, the edges that do appear are roughly equal in strength throughout, which makes their direction less compelling. Their excessive width and ragged boundaries introduce ambiguity, so one does not know their exact position as edges. And it is evident that some essential planes have been left out completely, so that the observer is merely guessing at a good deal of the internal structure. There is a great difference between guesswork and nice inference. If the Bodhisattva presents a structural re-

ality, the Strohmeier drawing presents its mannerism.

Symbolism is our third reality. On a goblet from prehistoric Mesopotamia (pl. II, 5), is a highly simplified figure of a mountain-goat and a disk within encircling horns. To regard this painting as a modification of visual realism would be to miss the entire point of symbolic art. Symbolic art was intended to be read, or uttered, as a language. One of our own Symbolic Realities, the alphabet, is regarded primarily as a linguistic symbol, and only for very special purposes do we ever refer to its small content of surface naturalism. The male mountain-goat is both a mountain-reference and a sun-reference. In the system of thought that uses such references, a small part often stands for the whole, hence the horns stand for the very goat they are on. The great sweep of the horns re-emphasizes the idea of *GOAT* and corresponds, in effect, to our use of underlining an important word or printing it in bold-face type.

The association of sun and goat is further strengthened by the placement of a sun-symbol within the circle of horn. On the disk itself is a herringbone and checkerboard pattern. The herringbone pattern is probably a water-reference in this case (cf. rivers on the Maikop vase, pl. VII, 24), while the crosshatching or checkerboard refers to tilled fields. It must not be forgotten that in cultures that originally used only the hoe, in days before the invention of the plough, the pattern of the field was a series of textured patches, alternating to right and left (Vid. Daryll Forde, *African Worlds*, p. 95). Smooth earth separating the tilling were the areas directly beneath the farmer's feet; the spots on which he stood while cultivating with the hoe. Such a pattern for "earth" still survives in many tile and linoleum floors of modern buildings. The finely made

goblet in question was undoubtedly an object of special use. If used as a chalice in some ritual for the fertility of the fields, perhaps for pouring a libation, its symbol could be construed as an invocation. It might have been uttered as follows: "As we pour this libation, may the sun-ram, in like manner, send water and sunshine, that our tilling may prosper." Such a statement is distinctly in the best interest of the community, and reflects a concern with ideas fundamental to human existence. The goat-panel is most certainly a recording of prayer, and very serious.

Compare the goblet with Salvador Dali's drawing of a nude, (pl. II, 6). In the Dali drawing there are non-naturalistic associations that imply symbol. The center of the body consists of a cabinet-work of drawers, which we cannot understand on an assumption of visual naturalism alone. However, if we examine the small scene in the upper right background, we see tiny female figures clothed in Victorian style dress, a small child, and a street with old-fashioned buildings including a church. In contrast, the large central figure is unclothed; it is anonymous, since the face is obscured by a cascade of hair. Open sores on the extended arm indicate corruption of the flesh; and the empty drawers of the torso imply an emptiness within. Putting these two aspects of the drawing together, and treating it as symbol, the picture yields as follows: *Woman presents to the outer world a demure appearance; conservative, home-loving, church-going, Victorian. But viewed more closely, Woman reveals herself as universally empty and corrupt.* The drawing is actually a visual pun that declares "Woman is really nothing but an empty chest of drawers."

The thought of the artist turns out to be merely another bitter generalization about women. It has, in fact, joined the artist to the ranks of the smoking-room philosophers whose wisdom consists of jokes

involving the travelling salesman. On only a slightly less pungent level, was it not Kipling who saw Woman as "a rag and a bone and a hank of hair"? Or with equal enlightenment, "A woman is only a woman, but a good cigar is a smoke". At the least, if this is a use of symbol, it is frivolous and mundane, not to say stupid and corrupt. Since such qualities are a distortion of intellect and a fraud on utterance, then the Dali drawing is a mannerism in regard to symbol.

The fourth type of reality concerns the subjective, psychological, emotional, or spiritual aspects of the world. Certainly there can be no embodiment of these qualities in a work of art if the work simply repeats the surfaces and volumes of things as they most commonly appear to the eye. Subjective reality only becomes apparent when the surface is altered in such a way as to show accurately the nature of the intangible condition within.

In a print by the late Edvard Munch, "The Cry" (pl. II, 7), the artist has selected those aspects of shape which refer directly to his problem. There is a bridge, rather a bridge-reference, which extends from an unknown point and goes toward an unknown point. The figures on this bridge-like shape move in opposite directions. The figures in the background seem to be of a commonsense type, and by implication, refer to a commonsense or normal world. The large figure in the foreground has no commonsense body, only a swaying shape that seems to rise from the ground. Its head is skull-like, and detached from the commonsense world, with emphasis on the open mouth and hysterical eyes. Throughout the picture, the repeated swaying and waving lines seem to pick up an endless, wavering cry that starts from the body itself, issues from the mouth, and continues in every feature of the landscape and sky. The



Figures 5 and 6 illustrate **THE SYMBOLIC TYPE OF ARTISTIC REALITY.**  
*The Object of Art expresses an analogical reference to its own primary function.*



FIGURE 5. (left) *Earthenware Vessel, Prehistoric Mesopotamia*  
*This decorated cup shows a true symbol related to its use.*

FIGURE 6. *Drawing, Salvador Dalí.* This work expresses a false generalization about women.

*Figures 7 and 8 illustrate*  
**THE SUBJECTIVE OR PSYCHOLOGICAL TYPE OF ARTISTIC REALITY.**  
*The Object of Art expresses a mood felt by the artist.*

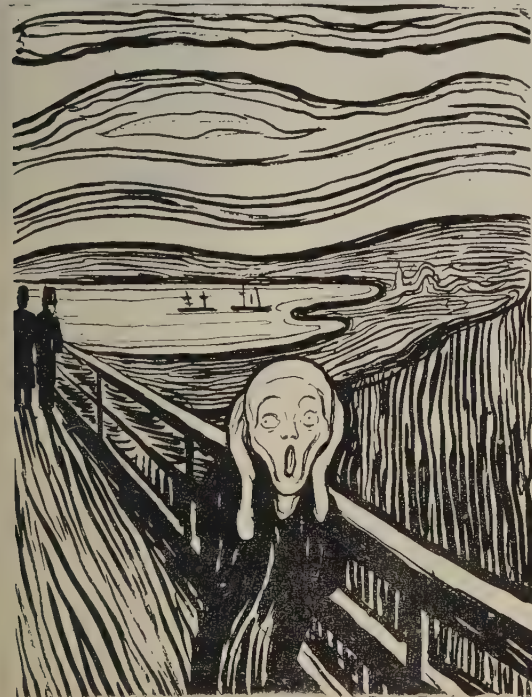


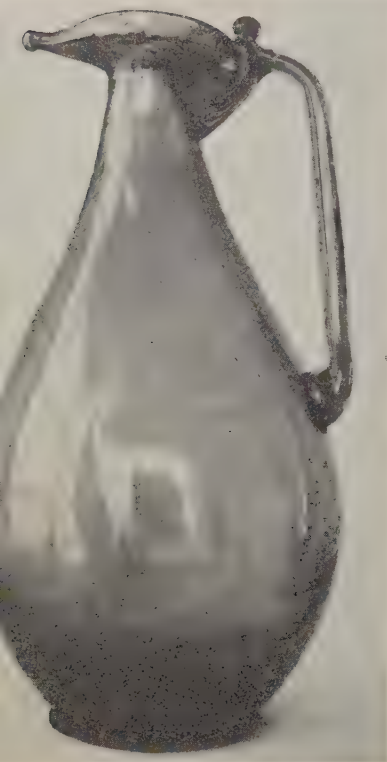
FIGURE 7. *Drawing,*  
*"The Cry", Edvard Munch*

*This composition truly expresses the psychological mood with which it is concerned.*



FIGURE 8. *Lithograph.*  
*"Missouri Musicians", Thomas Benton.*  
*There is a conflict here between the apparent mood (strange and ominous) and the real intention (rustic hilarity).*

Figure 9 illustrates THE FUNCTIONAL TYPE OF ARTISTIC REALITY.  
The Object of Art expresses its own Nature and Purpose.



*Japanese Glass Ewer,  
(Coll. Shosoin)*

The appearance of this vessel gives a true impression of its function. Compare with *Fur Tea-cup*, which has no true function, except to amuse or astonish.



Figures 10 and 11 illustrate The KINETIC TYPE OF ARTISTIC REALITY.  
The Object of Art is a body in motion.

FIGURE 10. *Pattern of Hand Movement. Dance Shirley Wimmer, Photo Harry Faber.*

*The photographic trace is true in that it does not claim to be the complete artistic expression.*



FIGURE 11. (left) *Painting, "The Battle of Bouvines" (in process)*

*George Mathieu. (Art News, Feb. 1955)*

*The artist claimed that his object was not the painted canvas but the performance itself; however, this claim is doubtful, since the painting is treated as an artistic entity, complete in itself.*



principal figure, in pressing its hands over the ears, indicates a deafness to its environment, a shutting-out. If we reinforce this shutting-out by the ever-increasing distance between the foreground and background figures, we have a sense of isolation. Since we know that the artist was greatly interested in the psychiatric findings of Freud, which were a new and intriguing formulation at the turn of the century, we may be fairly sure that the subjective matter has to do with the dreadful feeling of isolation that may accompany a psychic disturbance. It may be the sense of unearthly removal prior to a depressive or schizophrenic condition. It is this sense of fearful and terrible isolation that Munch is recording. The shapes he uses are not commonsense vision in a distorted rendering; they are the shapes of subjective distortion itself.

Thomas Benton, in a more recent work called "Missouri Musicians" (pl. II, 8), uses a type of "distortion" not unlike that of Munch. We find simplified faces, hollow cheeks and eyes, gnarled and elongated arms, fingers which are unnaturally knotted. In the moonlit background, a wild and eerie figure lashes along a carriage at a furious pace. The implication of these strange forms seems to be that of some deep, overall spiritual disturbance, an underlying emotional tension, at least. We wonder where this intense and tormented condition has its source, which would be the meaning of the picture. If we look carefully at the ghostly figure in the carriage, and at the steeds, we see the horses in two pairs. At the extreme right is the rump of yet another horse, indicating a third pair. Behind the horses rises part of a mountain. These elements can only mean "She'll be driving six white horses when she comes", and "She'll be coming 'round the mountain", etc., verses of the familiar folk-song. Surely, this is no eerie tale. Still less is it symptomatic

of subjective stress. It is a hearty, outgoing folk-expression of enjoyment. Good humor is its greatest subtlety. The attenuated shapes which lead us to look for psychic meaning, fail to produce such meaning. This is mild equivocation and pleasant deception. What seems to be Benton's approach to Subjective Reality, is more properly identified as another kind of mannerism.

The fifth reality in any work, is its functional shape. Functional Reality is by far the simplest to understand. It is so simple, indeed, that we often take it for granted, without realizing it as a special quality. It is even easier to understand than surface naturalism. In pl. III, 9 is shown an eighth century glass ewer, from Japan. Its shape reflects the function it embodies. It is to contain a liquid, and the great glass body is shaped like a teardrop, one of the inherent shapes of liquid, even liquid glass. It has a protective collar at the neck, and a small spout, implying that the vessel pours to a nicety. The foot provides stability, in function as well as appearance; yet the foot is not so large that it encroaches on the drop-shaped body. If it did so, it would contradict the containing function, and both foot and body would become less truthful thereby.

Functional Reality is not to be confused with functional purpose. The latter will be discussed farther on. It is quite possible for an object to lack functional reality, as we shall see, but still have functional purpose (cf. pl. V, 16, and discussion of *Mulongo*). It is evident that the ideal situation, in terms of function, is to have community of reality and purpose. Many utensils combine such dual functional aspects; the saw, the hammer, the plane, the sickle, the arrow, the bowl, the goblet, the pitcher, the potter's wheel, and so on. Having achieved community of reality and purpose ages ago, there is no need for

their basic shapes to be altered. What use, for example, would there be in a manneristic scythe? the scythe is already curious enough in shape to please the most avant-guarde formalist. Any further alteration in its shape would cause an imbalance in function; instead of cutting grain, it would cut the reaper. Hence, neither artist nor farmer troubles to alter its form.

The mannerism corresponding to functional reality is found in those objects which seem to have functional properties, but actually do not. We need only refer, again, to the Oppenheim "Fur Covered Objects" (pl. I, 2) to see that a teacup of fur is not a truthful cup, in terms of functions it is capable of discharging. Only slightly less untruthful is the fur-covered can-opener, which may now be purchased from certain mail-order houses, or even from the better college stationers. Anyone who delights in the mink-coated bungstarter, it may be contended, is on the road to decadence.

Kinetic Reality is our sixth and final type. In any work of art that does not in itself move, such as the photograph, painting, or sculpture, all we can find are the traces of a kinetic act. These are unmoving, however much they indicate a one-time motion. The only truly kinetic arts are the performing arts; dance, drama, music, and others. Perhaps one might add the mobile and the cinema. In a dance photograph (pl. III, 10), the dancer has traced the path of one hand by holding a flashlight. The pattern of bright lines simply indicates where her hand once passed by. But the dancer does not confuse this frozen pattern with the art itself. The pattern does not have the form of the dance, because the dance involves an entire body as its instrument. The significance that requires an entire body to make its point cannot be conveyed by the track of one lamp. No one would contend that

the wake of Columbus' ships had the same properties as the discovery of America. The light-pattern produced by the dancer is a kinetic reality of a very limited sort, since it is but the slender evidence of a greater, more complex kinetic art. True Kinetic Reality disappears when the performance ceases. Such traces as may linger; echoes, footprints, or photographs, are realities only by virtue of having emanated from an art that had reality.

This situation is reversed with Georges Mathieu. In creating "The Battle of Bouvines" (pl. III, 11), the artist asserts that painting is primarily a kinetic art. Yet it is the traces of the act (the painting), not the act itself which is considered the final expression. Of the many painters who presently work according to a kinetic premise, not one discards the finished canvas and says, "The picture was merely a trace; the real artistic significance was in the movement". Mathieu proceeds on a kinetic basis, like a performer. He decides on a theme for his movement, an ancient battle in which one of his ancestors took part. The artist dons improvised leggings and helmet to help recreate the ancient moment. He uses longhandled brushes in place of halberds (Art News, Feb. 1955, p. 75). He places all his faith in inspired motion, a veritable "paroxysmal" and "most unpredictable ballet" (loc. cit.). Unfortunately, he has failed to distinguish between movement that is intellectually controlled, and the chatter of frenetic vibration.

Accordingly, the finished product has the appearance of a trampled battle-ground, sure enough. But the sense of the battle, the power, the purpose, the victors and vanquished, the historical repercussions; all these are missing. And these are exactly the considerations of significance. The historical battle of Bouvines was fought by purposeful human beings for their own particular reasons. The painted



"Battle of Bouvines" does not indicate whether it was fought by men or dinosaurs. Mathieu's Kinetic Reality, if there was any, is recorded on the film of his cinematographer, or on the minds of those who witnessed his "ballet". Wherever the reality may be, it is assuredly not on his canvass; for that is a mannerism, paroxysms notwithstanding.

The inherent realities of a work of art tell us *how* it was conceived. From these realities we may sometimes infer, but only to a slight degree, *why* the work was con-

ceived. Only by knowing the artist's purposes, in addition to the appearance of the object, can we fully tell why the artist wrought as he did. And surely, no intelligent being makes anything without a purpose, though the purpose may be as slight as self-amusement.

*Dr. Kaplan's analysis will be concluded in the Christmas issue. He will there discuss similar subject matter, but will base his classifications not on types of Artistic Reality but on the Variety of Artistic Functions.*

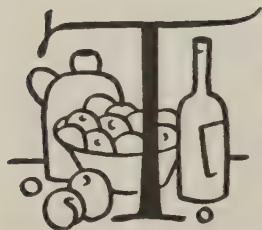


CRUSH, we beseech thee, O Lord, the pride of our enemies: and humble their insolence by the might of thy hand. Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

AMEN.

# WHY FINE ARTS?

Robert D. Feild



*HE average person who professes to know something about the fine arts will probably be more annoyed than interested if you ask him what the expression really means. After all, everyone knows what is meant by the phrase well enough to talk about it, without having to bother about the definition of terms and running the risk of being bewildered by the jargon of the specialist. It's the sort of question that is obviously intended to confuse issues, if not to embarrass one personally. The fine arts are all right as they are.*

Now much may be said for the simple honesty of this reaction if one could rest assured that the phrase, as used in common parlance, was actually based on something meaningful, something that could be elucidated further by one in a position to know, by a teacher of Fine Arts, shall we say, or one whose scholarship would preclude any need to circumvent the problem. But here is where the trouble begins. If the question is posed to such an authority the likelihood is that he will either brush it off with an expression of pained superiority or immediately embark on an involved explanation of the difference between the "useful" arts and those that are concerned with the "spirit", with probably a metaphysical digression on the inevitable dichotomy between art and science, and some final reference to the nature of man. But it will be seen that however profound these philosophic dicta may be they will have no bearing on the question — which is why some arts are called fine.

Fortunately we always have the Encyclopaedia Britannica to fall back on when we want a simple and straightforward answer to such questions. But in this case not even the Encyclopaedia is going to rise to the occasion. In the Eleventh Edition there are pages and pages devoted to the subject. The article opens with, "FINE

ARTS, the name given to a whole group of human activities, which have for their result what is collectively known as Fine Art." But nowhere is there any indication why these activities came to be called "fine". The article then goes on to say, "The arts which constitute the group are the five greater arts of architecture, sculpture, painting, music and poetry, with a number of subsidiary arts, of which dancing and the drama are amongst the most ancient and universal." — This, apart from having neither philosophical or historical validity has a naiveté about it that positively numbs the intellect. In the next sentence we are told, "In antiquity the fine arts were not explicitly named, nor even recognized as a separate class." And here we come to the crux of the whole question. At what point in history and under what circumstances did these special activities become separated out from all other types of human endeavor, and come to warrant the designation "fine"?

It may be argued that none of this is a matter of any great importance since the phrase has admirably served its purpose through the ages, and has, in fact, earned ever increasing respect. Have we not today Museums of Fine Arts in all our principal cities, and Departments of Fine Arts in all our leading institutions of higher



learning, and has not the study of Fine Arts even become a profession in itself? Yet perhaps, if we consider the matter a little further, all may not be quite as satisfactory as would appear at first glance. For instance, are there any two University Fine Arts Departments in the country that deal with the same subject matter, or are even in agreement on the relationship between the historical, the theoretical and the practical approach to whatever the subject may be? Are we clear where the History of Fine Arts impinges on the field of Archaeology, or under just what circumstances an anthropological artifact may be considered a work of fine art? If Architecture is a Fine Art at what precise point does it merge into Engineering? And what do we mean by painting anyway? Dare we assume that painting really refers to picture-making — which would include the graphic arts? If so, where are we to draw the line between engraving, photogravure and a modern four-color process? If we are not careful we shall be coming close to the old refuge of insisting that it has "all to be done by hand"! For if we abandon that charming concept then surely photography, both still and moving, will have to be taken into consideration — and straightway all the University Fine Arts Departments in the country will have to revise their curricula. Or are we to assume that the Fine Arts are something that have already happened, that they are now a part of history only to be studied and enjoyed in retrospect? This can hardly prove satisfactory for it requires a whole new orientation of our attitude to the "modern movement". And then, who knows, self-expressionism or "the constructive image", as Sir Herbert Read delights to call it, might find itself falling into the category of psychopathology.

On second thoughts we are forced to confess that what is meant by the Fine

Arts is not as clear as it might be. And it may be that the time has come to be jolted out of our complacency. Is it not possible that we have been using the phrase as a front for our own cultural inadequacies, and perhaps even frustrating our collective genius by continually forcing ourselves back into a worn-out mould that has long since served its purpose? Perhaps it may be as well to consider for a moment how we got the way we are.

As a result of the breakdown of the Guild System in Italy in the 16th century and the rise of the banker princes, patronage was transferred from the Church to those individuals who were in a position to exploit to their own advantage the outstanding craftsmen of the age. The maintenance of standards in the production of anything that was socially needful, which had hitherto been the responsibility of society as a whole, now reverted to the judgement of the individual patron; and since architecture, painting and sculpture lent themselves particularly to personal aggrandisement they became separated out from all other craft activities. With this self-segregation of what came to be known as the "Arti di disegno" we get the first great break in the traditional use of the word art as signifying the making of *anything* that is well made. We also get the assumption that certain man-made products, according to their very nature, take precedence over all others. This set the pattern. With the rise to power of France in the 17th century, Louis XIV, or rather his ministers, further capitalized on the situation by deciding to get the Arti di disegno under State control. With the foundation of "Académie royale de la peinture et de la sculpture" in 1648, also entitled "Académie royale des beaux arts" the concept of the superiority of these special activities became crystalized for good and all.

But it was not until the Industrial

Revolution was well under way in England in the 18th century that "les beaux arts" (belle arti, schöne Künste) became anglicised into "fine arts". It should be remembered that England did not have any art tradition of her own in any way comparable to that of France or Italy. And since her own indigenous culture did not stem directly from the Mediterranean basin there was no reason, in fact no way, for her to participate in that rebirth of the classical tradition which is generally referred to as the Renaissance. It was hardly surprising, therefore, when she found herself politically and economically on top of the world, that she should be a little self-conscious of her lack of understanding of all the art activities that had been going forward on the mainland during the last few centuries. Yet somehow those in authority, with the needful prestige that goes with Empire building, had to assert their power, even over art. So, to counteract their obtuseness, they tried to circumvent the whole idea of any normal patronage by employing middle-men, who were called "connoisseurs", to tell them both what they ought to admire and, — which in the light of history became more important,— what they ought to buy. With the inauguration of "The Rule of Taste" the responsibility of the patron disappears from Western culture. Art now becomes something outside the workaday world, divorced entirely from industry and the discoveries of science, and independent

of any social progress. Art becomes "polite", something you have to learn about or be told about or be able to "appreciate", without the need for any intuitive understanding or any refinement of sensibility. It is these "polite arts" that took over the by now generally accepted term of "les beaux arts", and that blossomed out finally into "the fine arts" — the phrase which is still in use to-day, with the same contradictions, the same absurdities, the same dishonesties, even as we approach the atomic age.

Is it not time we recovered the initiative and got back into the great tradition, before the imaginary conflict had been allowed to develop between art and industry; before man, as workman and artist, had surrendered his self-respect by making things that were to be judged by their "sales value" rather than their intrinsic worth; in fact before the word "art" had become so corrupted that it had virtually lost all meaning? For therein lies our dilemma. By our continued insistence on talking about the fine arts as if the term had some meaning outside its 17th century context we are closing our minds to the real meaning of the word "art". Can we afford to risk much longer the attempt to build a new culture, without knowing what we are doing — that is to say, without having the courage to define our terms? For without art, understood and expressed unselfconsciously, no civilization can endure for any length of time.

## COVER DESIGNS OF VOLUME XIX

*This issue brings Volume XIX to an end, and with it the set of cover designs made by Mr. Cladek for this volume. The Catholic Art Quarterly is a means of disseminating light, but the feeble rays that shine from our candlestick are only a tiny reflection on the splendor that emanates from the Supernal Sun. The four designs are intended to suggest this—the four sources of Light being the Christmas Star; the Rising Sun of Easter, Conqueror of darkness, sin, and death; the Pentecostal Lightning Flash with its seven sparks; and lastly the slender beam of Light which is the shaft of the Archangel's lance, piercing the head of evil.*



# THE ACTING PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Thomas Phelan



TWO hundred eight (208) ballots were cast in the Revised By-Laws voting. Two hundred three (203) accepted the Revised By-Laws *in toto*. The other 5 members rejected them for various reasons. All reasons for rejection given will be kept on file for consideration at the next revision. Thanks to the Chairman of this revision committee, Sister M. Jeanne, O.S.F., and to our fellow members, Mr. Graham Carey, Miss Ade de Bethune, and Mr. John Bennett Shaw.

A Nominations Committee, consisting of Mrs. Nelson Mercer, Chairman, Sister M. Ruth, S.S.J., and Miss Ade de Bethune, will probably have sent out ballots for new officers of the Association by the time this issue of *THE QUARTERLY* reaches you. We thank them for their long efforts.

The officers and some members of your Association, present in Washington at the Catholic University for an excellent Workshop on Art as Language, met on June 23rd. Among other things, the problem of re-districting and re-activating all our regions was discussed. Starting with some re-districting suggestions made by a special committee consisting of Miss Ann Grill and Mr. John Bennett Shaw, a new alignment of States in regions was accepted. We hope to publish this new alignment and the new regional directors in the Christmas issue of *THE QUARTERLY*. Active regions are one of the best means to the further dissemination of our ideas, as expressed in the Constitution.

May we suggest here that all our members study frequently the Constitution. It was last published in the Michaelmas 1955 issue of *THE QUARTERLY*. The Consti-

tution contains the reasons and purposes for our existence. It is a presentation of the perennial philosophy of the Church as it applies to art, the work of making. If we are to be effective in our apostolate to restore the work of making useful things under the headship of Christ, then we must all be not only completely steeped in the ideas set forth in our Constitution, but also active apostles of "the word."

Speaking of an effective apostolate, we are attempting to formulate a program of promotion. We are not anxious for numbers for numbers' sake, or even for finances' sake. But we do want and need numbers for the sake of disseminating our ideas and, so, making our contribution to the struggle against secularism. Any suggestions you may have about promotion would be most happily received.

Because of difficulties in arriving at an acceptable program for the 1956 National Convention, we have cancelled it. We will begin planning for the 1957 Convention at an officers' meeting (which will be open to any interested members) to be held this Fall in Washington, D. C.

Last minute bulletin: I have just returned from the excellent 17th Liturgical Week which was held in London, Ontario. We made many important contacts while there and introduced a plan of cooperation between the Liturgical Conference and the Catholic Art Association which will be considered at their Fall Board of Directors' meeting and our Fall Officers' meeting. Two of our Canadian members, Sister M. Gertrude, S.S.N.D. and Sister M. Margaret, S.S.N.D., with the approval of His Excellency, the Most Reverend John C. Cody, D.D., LL.D., patron of the Liturgical Week called a meeting during the Week

of all artists and people interested in forming a Canadian art association. I was graciously invited to speak to this impressive group about the Catholic Art Association, and at their second meeting they voted unanimously to join with us as a

Canadian Region of our Association. They hope that as numbers of Canadian members of the Association grow this extensive Region will be sub-divided into smaller ones. Miss Angela Flood, London, Ontario, was elected first Regional Director.

## BOOK REVIEW

### THE MEANING OF THE MONASTIC LIFE

BOUYER, LOUIS

New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1956.

209 pp., translated by Kathleen Pond, \$4.



NE may ask immediately why we review a book on the monastic life in an Art publication. The first answer, to use the words of Father Bouyer, in his preface to the book, is that "The vocation of the monk is, but is no more than, the vocation of the baptized man." Father Bouyer insists that, because of this, "this book is equally for every Christian." The second answer is, of course, that the Christian artist, by his very title, must not only understand the meaning of his vocation as a Christian but must live accordingly or else he is merely the secularized soul in a strange coat, a hypocrite. The Christian artist must 'speak' of a God he has found.

And the "finding" of God, or the search for God which results in "finding" God, more or less, is what Father Bouyer answers is the meaning of the monastic, the Christian life, in his first chapter.

"To seek God", to seek Him as a person, as the Person *par excellence*, and not only as the 'Thou' to whom all our love should be addressed, but as the 'I' who has first approached us, whose word of love, addressed to the primeval chaos, drew us forth from it in the first place, and spoken to us in our sin, draws us forth from it again: to be a

monk is nothing else than this. To be a monk, then, is simply to be an integral Christian. And regarded in this light, the Christian himself is simply the man restored by the Word of the Gospel to the vocation which the creative Word destined for him: to respond to the Word of *Agapé* by the word of faith, in order eventually to meet God face to face.

"The Search for God" is the first chapter in the first half of the book which deals with the theory of the monastic and, *a fortiori*, the Christian life. Father Bouyer next presents the monastic life as "Angelic Life" and follows by saying that "man cannot enter upon the angelic life without first dying and rising." The ideal of the life is "Light Inaccessible," or "the vision of God." This vision is attained "In Spiritu", "Per Filium", "Ad Patrem."

The second half of the book is devoted to the practice of the monastic — Christian life, the mechanics one might say. There are chapters on "Detachment — The Stripping of Self", "Prayer", "Penance and Mortification", "Work", "Lectio Divina", "The 'Opus Dei'", "The Mass." This is followed by a conclusion which marvelously traces the development of the concepts of wisdom, gnosis and the super-gnosis of St. Paul and speaks of monas-



ticism as "both the heir and the fulfillment of the whole sapiential and gnostic tradition."



Who would presume to criticize Father Bouyer? Perhaps the only possible criticism one would make is that his breadth and depth of knowledge are too much for the ordinary mind to grasp and chew in anything but little doses and with utter concentration. The ordinary mind is so used to pertly categorized delineations that it is at times overwhelmed with such a cosmic view. The only word which can aptly describe this reviewer's attitude is awe.

But this book should be studied by every artist, and every Christian. In an age when we are forced back to fundamentals we need most especially to know the meaning of our calling as Sons of God. We need to understand it in all the beauty of its simplicity and all the fullness of its complexity. No other single book so completely answers the need for such an explanation.

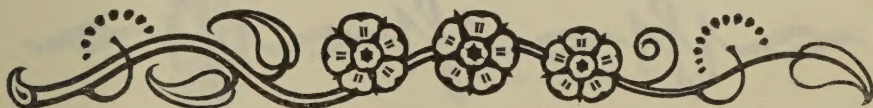
## A CORRECTION

### THE EDITOR:

I have long since ceased to be amazed at the aplomb Catholics of the Latin Rite show in their disregard of the Eastern Rites. Father T. Phelan's article "The Nature and Shape of the Chasuble" (*C. A. Q.* Christmas 1955) was very interesting to me, and so was Father E. Stufin's on "The Chasuble in the Roman Rite" (*Liturgical Arts*, August 1956). Both authors present a learned study of their

subject, yet neither ever avers to the fact that the Roman chasuble is still worn in its traditional form in the Byzantine Rites. Instead of cutting off the sides of the ancient garment, we merely shortened the front. The Latins might profitably turn sideways to their cousins instead of looking backwards only.

PETER BODNAR  
Chicago, Illinois



## CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

THOMAS DERRICK 1886-1954. English painter and draughtsman. He visited the United States in 1950, at which time he made several contributions to the *Catholic Art Quarterly*. The illustration on page 143 of this issue is a reproduction of a wood cut from his hand, made for the *Everyman* published by Dent's of London. His life and work were reviewed in our Easter 1954 issue, Volume XVIII, No. 2. The present Article is reprinted with permission from *G. K.'s Weekly*, December 30, 1937.

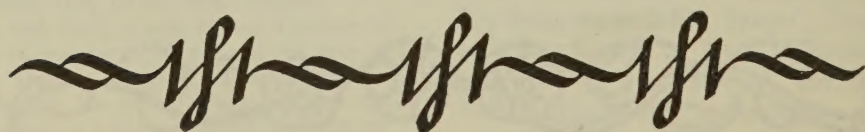
ROBERT D. FEILD. Born in England, he began professional life as a painter, and has taught in this country since the 1920s. He is the author of *The Art of Walt Disney*, on the preparation of which he worked for a year or more in the Disney Studios, where he made a thorough analytical study of the art of cinematography from the scholastic point of view. He is at present Professor of Art at Tulane University, and has recently been appointed Director of the Southern Region of the C. A. A.

SISTER MARY JEANNE, O.S.F. Until this summer head of the Art Department at Rosary Hill College, Buffalo, N. Y., and since 1950 Editor of the *Catholic Art Quarterly*. She is now working for her doctorate at The Catholic University. She

was in charge of the Workshop on Art at The Catholic University in 1955 and 1956. At the most recent of these she read a paper the opening of which is here reprinted with the permission of the Director of Workshops.

SIDNEY M. KAPLAN. Orientalist and Professor of Art at Ohio State University. His paper, of which we give here the first installment, was read at the Workshop on Art at The Catholic University in Washington last June, and is reprinted from the *Workshop Proceedings* by permission of the Director of Workshops. Dr. Kaplan is at present travelling in the Far East, and hopes to visit Afghanistan before his return in 1957.

EDITH BALLINGER PRICE. Authoress, painter, and illustrator of children's books. Miss Price has devoted much of her life to the problems of handicapped children, and was largely responsible for the establishment of the Brownies, youngest level of the Girl Scouts of the U. S. A. Her gift of narrative, combined with her interest in children, obviously fits her to treat the topic she has chosen. Her paper is condensed from a recent broadcast. The verses are from her book "The Four Winds", of which Messers J. B. Lippincott & Co. hold the copyright.





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This crucifix is printed from a block cut by the English craftsman, Philip Hagreen. He used it as the ornament for an IDENTIFICATION FOLDER, the words of which we have reproduced here, though in a different type face. The paper will take writing ink satisfactorily, and we have left the other side blank. If cut along the ruled lines the little folder can be used as originally intended.



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